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Pathfinding Story

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No. 1.

My Chum's Story.





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No. 1

A CHARMING STORY

(COMPLETE)

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By AUSTIN ABBOTT

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United States Express Company

FEBRUARY, 1908

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A CHARMING STORY

A Half-Hour's Delight

SALUTATORY

MANY choice and charming stories are lost through having been presented to the public in a manner that gave them only temporary circulation. In many old magazines are found stories of such a character, and it is our desire to bring to the attention of our friends some of these that will be remembered by readers of a generation ago. It gives us pleasure, therefore, to offer on the succeeding pages, complete in itself, one of the most charming of the stories published in "Harper's Monthly" in the "Sixties." We are sorry that the author, Mr. Austin Abbott, is no longer alive; if he were, it would be our duty and pleasure to offer him our apologies for some slight liberties and modifications we have taken with the original text.

We do not wish you to think that this story is revived without some ulterior purpose; it is published with the idea of impressing upon the mind of the public that the United States Express Company issues Travelers' Checks and Foreign Exchange, but we trust this is done in such a delicate way as not to offend our readers.

MY CHUM'S STORY

BY AUSTIN ABBOTT

1.—MY CHUM.

WHEN I was in college I roomed with—well, never mind his name now, for you will hear of him in his own way before long.

He was remarkable in college for three things—quick wit, laziness, and story-telling. Of the three, laziness was rather his strong point. His stories, of which he had an inexhaustible fund, made him a favorite in all circles among the students; and his wit helped him out of many a corner in which his laziness would otherwise have surrendered him to discipline.

"Don't hesitate so," said the Professor of Metaphysics to him, encouragingly, in one of our first recitations in "Locke on the Understanding." "Speak out: I think you are correct."

"The fact is," returned Chum, who had only glanced over the lesson in his quick way, "the author is very abstruse, and I feel as if I had a Lock-jaw of the Understanding."

Chum was not pleased, second term of Junior year, when we were required to write compositions once a month. I always liked to write, when I had any ideas; and I studied shorthand in order to write other people's ideas when I had none of my own. Chum, who was full of ideas, hated to write. "You might as well ask me," said he, "to dispense all the dews of a broad summer evening through the nozzle of your garden watering-pot as expect me to condense my thoughts, by the point of a mean steel pen, on a sheet of note-paper. Why, I think all over, and I can't write it."

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After sitting silent at his writing-table he asked me if my sister had a sewing-machine.

"Yes, she has. Why do you ask?"

"Because I wish you would take her needle out of the shank and put a pen in instead, and see if a fellow can't write by working the treadle! But oh, hum! the girls have got ahead of us on the labor-saving machines, I am afraid."

With this he threw down his pen and went off, and I believe it was the last time he thought of his composition until the Saturday when we were going to the lecture-room to read. He then begged a half-quire of paper from my portfolio, and confessed that he had not written a word.

When he was called on in turn to read he rose, to my great amazement, faced the Professor, unrolled his half-quire of white paper, holding it up between him and his preceptor as if it were a hardly legible manuscript, cast upon me a confidential but grave glance, cleared his throat, and in a steady voice commenced a story which ran substantially as follows:

Many years ago an unfortunate woman, who had married a foreign gentleman of elegant but dissipated habits, and followed him with fidelity to the end of his downward course abroad, found herself, upon his sudden death in a duel, left a widow, far from her native land. Her few relatives at home were wealthy, but she had been long estranged from them by her husband's course.

She had now one son, a bright lad of twelve, whose waywardness constantly reminded her of the waywardness of her unhappy husband. Etienne's growing resemblance to his deceased father enhanced her affection for the boy, while it doubled her solicitude as to his future, by continually awakening the tender but painful memories of the past.

Some United States Express Travelers' Checks and a few valuables were left to her out of the wreck of her fortune; and in this wretched state she counted herself happy that she was able to return to her own land, with her alien-born son, and bearing the remains of her alien husband.

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Soon after landing she gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. The nearest relatives of this sad widow, Mrs. Merprise, were two brothers, of the name of Krebb, one of whom, Louis, paid some attention to her wants. Louis Krebb was a wealthy gentleman who resided in the city of New York. He was unmarried, but maintained a considerable establishment, and divided his leisure between his home and his club. Among a large circle of acquaintance he was well spoken of out of respect to his wealth, and on the same account many little eccentricities of character, which would have provoked criticism if exhibited by a "small fellow," as a man of moderate means is called by some others, were unnoticed in him.

This brother assisted the widow to obtain a small cottage in a quiet village on the banks of the Housatonic River. She chose this situation because she desired to live economically; and here she might, without great discomfort, even labor with her own hands, if that should be necessary, for the welfare of her children. To avoid such a necessity she would have gladly accepted further assistance from her wealthy brother if it had been offered; but the aid which she hesitated to ask he would not volunteer to give. Perhaps, knowing her pride, he satisfied himself with assuring her, in general terms, and not in the most cordial manner, that if she wanted anything more she must ask for it. He went back to the city leaving her pleasantly esconced in a comfortable little home, but without inquiring too closely into her resources for the future.

Mrs. Merprise struggled successfully for life, and brought up her children with such teaching as her own fireside and the village school afforded.

When the elder son, Etienne, was grown a handsome, tall, and slender fellow of twenty, and Stephen and Susie, the twins, were stout children of eight or nine, Miss Margaret Maidstone came to the village to take charge of the district school. Her arrival was a great event in the village. She was a mature and well-educated woman, who had chosen teaching for her profession, as it were. She was prepossess-

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ing in personal appearance, and every one wondered why she should remain a teacher at thirty years of age.

Etienne at this time was a leading spirit among the young people of the village, yet not a favorite with them. Others were more thoroughly taught, more practically trained than he; but he was more apt and more fastidious, and had a superior address and adroitness, which gave him precedence of them. He had a good degree of that power of self-adaptation which enables its possessor to make himself agreeable to persons of the most opposite characteristics, and even to exert a fascinating influence over minds of stronger qualities; but his feelings, though deep, were narrow and selfish. He had not those broad, common sympathies which, better than anything except the passion of love, call that fascinating self-adaptation into exercise, and make the possessor universally agreeable. He was conscious of his superiority in manners and tastes, and this consciousness tended to repel the affection of those who followed his lead. But as yet he was unconscious of the power of self-adaptation which gave him this superficial superiority, because he lacked hitherto the motive force of a strong affection which should set it in play.

Etienne soon made an impression upon the mind of the new teacher that led her to a strong though mixed interest in him. She possessed a good share of those ready sympathies which he lacked, and to the force of these were soon added a personal interest in his character and a warm wish for his welfare. He was headstrong, and constantly resisted the control of his mother; but he soon found himself yielding his own will, with pleasure, to Miss Maidstone, and even seeking from her good counsel he would have laughed at if another person had offered it. In this way an intimacy sprung up between them such as a Junior in college is supposed to know nothing about. It is said, however, by those who *do* know, that two hearts do thus sometimes effect a telegraphic union, the tie being, in exterior appearance, nothing but a commonplace, non-conducting, scholastic, Platonic affection; while within, concealed and protected by

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this flexible insulator, is an interior core of electric cord.

Before she was aware of it Margaret Maidstone was more than half in love with Etienne, and had almost half-acknowledged it. She refused to enter into an engagement of marriage with him, pointing out the disparity of their ages, and asserting the sisterly nature of her interest in him as the sole ground of their intimacy. She was, however, too much fascinated by the young man to relinquish an acquaintance which aroused the most interior and deepest affections of her soul. Her prudence sufficed to deter her from accepting him as her betrothed, but it did not suffice to withdraw her from his agreeable companionship. She indirectly encouraged a fruitless passion, which she vainly thought she could control for her own peace of mind, and could use for his welfare.

Little Stephen and Susie, walking to and from school, often carried some little message or note between these loving friends, and without knowing what they were about, promoted the progress of a passion which determined the future of their brother.

At about the time when Margaret began to feel the inevitable struggle that was approaching she first met with Mr. Krebb, the uncle of Etienne. This gentleman, well advanced in years but well preserved in condition, visited the town, partly at the request of Mrs. Merprise, who was in failing health, and partly to look at a new mill property he was urged to buy. It happened that Miss Maidstone was returning from New York in the same train, at the end of a short vacation, and they met as fellow-travelers, accidentally discovering that they were going to the same place.

Mr. Krebb addressed himself with much courtesy to entertain her. He drew out the mental resources of his fair and womanly companion, and gazed with much pleasure on her handsome and expressive face, as she conversed with her own animation upon the topics of the day. He pressed her with questions about the village and the family of Mrs. Merprise. She spoke warmly of Mrs. Merprise, who was now an invalid, and praised the twins, who were

her best pupils. She made an effort to speak of Etienne frankly and without embarrassment. But she found in so doing that her own tongue revealed to her a sober estimate of his character which she had not acknowledged to herself before. She spoke no ill of him; but that which she did say was so guarded and qualified that she was startled at her own words. This conversation on her own part made an impression on her mind which she could not efface. She felt now, in the presence of Mr. Krebb, that she had never before deliberately measured Etienne's worth. She had regarded him with a pure sympathy under the influence of his fascinating manners, and in solitude had cherished the charm which his companionship possessed for her. But now, when she strove to give the best account of him that she could, she was alarmed to hear herself speaking so much in the tone of apology or excuse. When she was secluded in the rural scene where she met Etienne he filled a large space in her little world; but a visit to New York, and converse with men and women who were full of the grave activities of life, enlarged her horizon; she became more conscious of her own innate ambitions, and in Etienne's absence a gulf appeared between her own assiduous habits and tastes and his unsettled mind and purposeless life. The most favorable estimate which her tongue could put forth in definite words entered her ears again as a condemnation.

So quickly does it sometimes cool the heated vapors of the brain to make a little circuit in the outer air.

That which we hear our own tongues say, if it does not confirm us, convicts us. Margaret, after this conversation, felt that she was self-convicted. What she had said about Etienne, by its kindly silence and omissions, defined the negative limits of his character, and enabled her judgment, for the first time, decisively to condemn the false position into which her sympathies and the luxury of his affection had led her.

Such are the contradictions of judgment and affection that as they approached the village station her newly-formed judgment began to waver before the rising emotion of ex-

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pectancy. She wondered if Etienne would come to meet her, and both hoped and feared that he would. Mr. Krebb courteously assisted her to alight from the car, and offered her his arm to lead her through the crowd. Following him thus, she saw Etienne awaiting them just without. A flush of pleasure on her face answered for the moment to the flash of delight his countenance showed at the recognition; but the next moment he discovered that she was hanging on the arm of a stranger. His brows fell; he gazed at her an instant; and then, turning, disappeared before she could approach him. He was seized by a jealousy which was the more sharp because he knew he had no right to be jealous. His unreasonableness rebuked the pleasurable emotions she had indulged; and her judgment asserted itself again, and she condemned him more strongly than before.

From this time Margaret Maidstone withdrew from her intimacy with Etienne. She was wounded by his expostulations, and half repented her determination; but this feeling was superseded by regret to see him abandon the good resolutions he had formed under her influence. He became as wayward as ever before, and she was sorrowfully confirmed in her judgment.

She was subsequently surprised by the attentions which Mr. Krebb paid to her, and soon by his proposals of marriage. Flattered, yet disappointed, half pleased and half indifferent, she tried to arouse in favor of Mr. Krebb the emotions that Etienne had awakened. She passively received his addresses, and referred him to "Papa," as even an independent young lady of thirty years may well do in a case of short acquaintance.

"Papa" and Mr. Krebb soon arranged the matter; the wedding took place; and in due season Mrs. Margaret Krebb assumed her new position at the head of the establishment of the elderly capitalist whose name and fortunes she had prudentially consented to share.

Poor Etienne, who had never consented to take "No" for an answer from Margaret, declared he would not remain to witness such a match, and on the eve of the wedding he

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broke his mother's heart by suddenly disappearing. His hat was afterward found on the bank of the river; and after the lapse of years the opinion that he had drowned himself became fully accepted by all the family, and his death became a legal fact. His mother died lamenting her lost son. She committed the care of her remaining children to a kind neighbor, in whose family they proved industrious and useful. Stephen adopted the trade of a mason, and shortly before he became of age he removed with Susie to New York, where he found employment. He neither sought nor received attention from Mr. and Mrs. Krebb, but in his own sturdy way set about working out his own fortunes.

Mrs. Krebb, at the head of her city establishment, found many hours in which she could not but fondly think her lot might have been different—more humble yet more happy. Yet she could not, in all her reveries, decisively conclude whether she wished it had been otherwise with her or not.

At this point Chum ceased, and took his seat.

The Professor sat at his desk, with his chin thrust forward, and his eyes closely set, looking at Chum. Chum rolled up his white paper tightly, put it in his pocket, and tried very hard to look unconcerned.

We could not tell whether the Professor was disappointed at this lame conclusion of what had promised to be a romance, or whether he was dissatisfied that a love-story should be introduced among the grave essays which Juniors are wont to produce.

He tapped on his desk and said: "Young gentlemen, you may hand me your manuscripts for corrections. I will return them next week."

Chum was evidently shocked; but he buttoned over his pocket, and, after the others had handed in their sheets, he rose and said, respectfully: "If you please, Sir, mine is not yet finished. It will be concluded next time, so it will be necessary for me to keep it; and I will hand both parts in together."

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Saying this, he sat down and folded his arms as if there was nothing more to be said.

"But I shall assign you a *subject* for next session," said the Professor, looking askance at Chum. "I wish you all to take the same subject: say—say *Heroism*."

"Heroism!" said Chum. "That's exactly what the next part of my composition is about."

Before his last word was uttered the class broke up. Chum, sitting next me, near the door, was the first to escape.

"There's your paper," said he, tossing down the half-quire. "Much obliged."

II.—HEROISM.

After our Professor of Rhetoric, in second term, Junior year, had given us a subject for composition, instead of leaving us each to choose his own, Chum seemed more disinclined to write than ever. He is certainly a fellow of ability, and, listening to his conversation, you would think him full of intellectual wealth. But he never would work. This, however, relates to what he used to be. I hear recently that he has at last set up in life for himself, has married a good, sensible New England girl, and got a place on the editorial staff of a New York daily paper. I have no doubt that between them, he'll get bravely over his college indolence.

Chum seemed to make no more preparation for his second composition than for his first. He is quite incapable, I know, of deliberately planning a deceit; and I doubt whether he gave a thought to his appearance in the class without a manuscript until the other boys began to read.

As his turn approached he whispered to me, "Where's my paper? Give me some paper."

"I have none," replied I, laughing at his anxiety. I thought he richly deserved to be caught, for presuming so far on the Professor's ignorance or indulgence as to tell one of his rambling stories instead of writing a composition.

He shrugged his shoulders and sat back composedly.

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When I finished my reading, and the Professor occupied himself in marking his estimate of its merits upon his record of the class, Chum took up my manuscript curiously, and turned over the leaves. In a moment his name was called, and he was on his feet, holding up my paper before him, and with his prepossessing effrontery actually reading the title of my own grave essay as the name of his story. The boys were naturally more interested in one of Chum's tales than in their own homilies, and even the unsuspecting Professor settled himself comfortably in his chair, as if enjoying a sort of gratification in this variation of our routine.

"Heroism is not, as has been well said by an able writer"—and here, with mock gravity, Chum gave a glance at me, as if to mark the compliment, and acknowledge that he was reading the first sentences of my own essay—"heroism is not confined to the lofty and the great. It is often found in its purest state among those who, by reason of their humble circumstances, the world will never recognize as heroes."

These were *my* very words! I thought it was a fine sentiment when I originated it, and I think so still. I did not know whether to be vexed or gratified by his stealing my work; but it sounded so well, as he rolled out the rounded period, that, instead of snatching my manuscript from his hands, I sat still to hear more.

But although his eye seemed to follow my lines, and he turned over leaf after leaf as he went on, that was the end of his extract, and he commenced his own "composition," as I suppose he called it, in the following tenor:

Upon the deck of a small trading-vessel on the Atlantic, about midway between New York and Liverpool, two young women sat in a crouching posture against the bulwark, the better to evade the violent motion of the vessel, which was riding over the huge waves of a subsiding storm. They were dressed in thick, dark, short skirts, each with a handkerchief pinned over the shoulders. The elder wore a white cap much disheveled and stained by the weather, while the fair hair of the younger was drawn tightly back each side of the

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forehead, and half hung, half fell, in neglected locks behind. At their feet lay a large Newfoundland dog, who, not being able to hold on where he lay, as the girls could by the bulwark, seemed in danger of sliding away from them across the wet and slippery deck as the vessel rose steeply into the air after every downward plunge. From time to time, as the vessel thus careened more than usual, he looked up into the face of the younger girl with an expression which seemed to say that he would not leave their feet if he could help it; and she rewarded these dumb assurances of fidelity with an affectionate caress or some native Irish words of praise, which, doubtless, Newfoundland dogs understand as well as any other language. Other groups of wretched, weather-worn passengers crouched here and there about the deck.

"Well, Mary," said the elder of the emigrant girls, "we can't go on, and we must go back. It is no use talking o' Thomas now, Heaven help him! Here we are going home, for they say this crooked track is the straight road to Liverpool. And it's the hand o' the Lord or the Blessed Virgin" (crossing herself), "and you ought to praise her for it this minute, as I mean to do if I ever set foot on dry shore again.

"And I always thought," she continued, as her sister was silent, "that it was fooling business for us two girls to set off alone, and leave mother lone and lorn."

"Ah, Biddy dear," said the younger, turning up a ruddy, tearful, smiling face to her sister, and kissing her, "never mind what you thought and said; for when Thomas sent us a letter that he was hurt and in the hospital, didn't he tell us to come to him if we could, and bring mother, too, if she would come, and—but she wouldn't and couldn't; and weren't you a dear good girl to come with me, who would have had to come all alone of my own heart if you hadn't; and didn't mother tell us to go, and give us her blessing; and what will she say to us if we come back without him, nor a word of him, and he sick and dying, and nobody—"

This sentence, begun so cheerily, sank at its close into

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sobs; and the poor girl hid her face in her sister's lap, crying aloud.

"There now, Mary dear," resumed her sister, assuming in her turn the tone of consolation, "don't vex your soul with what we've gone to do, for we'll soon be safe back again. Indeed, we meant no harm if we did leave poor mother, and she consenting to it for Thomas's good; and I can't sleep o' nights on the water for thinking of her, and who is to take care of her, and being sea-sick and homesick all at once."

"Well," said Mary, resolutely, lifting her head. "Thomas is hurt and sick in America, and we were sent for, and we were sent; and we would have gone if we weren't; and what if we have been wrecked? We're saved; and I say we ought to go on to Thomas the very first chance we get."

"The first chance you get?" cried Bridget; "and isn't the first chance we've got just to go straight back home? There we were, in that horrid, sad steerage, when the great ship took fire in the storm. Steerage people can't fight against the Lord's storms and fires and wrecks, and can't run away from them, whatever the cabin folks may do in their boats and life-preservers. And don't you think the Lord sends us chances as well as changes, and life as well as death? and here is His chance, bless the Lord! for just a handful of us, and all the rest burned and drowned and lost; and you saved by the hair of your head by a strange dog after I had seen you go down with the salt-water in my own eyes; and it's just a chance to go straight home. Come, come, now," she concluded, in a tone of gentle authority; "away with your foolish talk about America, and thank the Blessed Virgin you are just where you are, and you're going just where you're going!"

To this the younger sister made no reply, but in silence threw herself upon the neck of the noble dog to whom she owed her life, as if she were thanking him anew; or, perhaps, as if, unable to secure her sister's concurrence in her sense of duty to her sick brother, she was throwing herself upon Rover as her sole companion, and meditating upon the

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possibility of launching off with him to swim to America.

While the two wrecked and rescued emigrants were thus discussing their conditions upon mid-ocean, and contemplating the sudden change which had reversed their destination, the mother sat alone in a plain but comfortable cottage among the hills in one of the central counties of Ireland. She looked out upon the sunshine and said to herself: "Aweel, the girls must now be safe over; and Thomas, God help him! they're with him now. Oh, when will they bring him home?"

Thomas, in his cot-bed in the hospital in New York, three thousand miles from home, asked the attendant if the weather was fair.

"And what are you always asking after the weather for?" retorted the attendant. "Never mind the weather. You'll never need an umbrella again unless you lie stiller than this;" and she gently spread over the restless sufferer the clothes which he had thrown off.

"Tell me," said he, moving as if he would, but could not, raise his arms to detain his interlocutor—"tell me, is it fair? Does the sun shine? Is there a fair wind?"

"Come, come!" was the reply, "don't vex yourself about the weather. They told me he was a mason," said the old woman to herself; "and here he is a-raving about the weather, just as if he had been off work in the storm and must begin again first fair day.

"Come, come, deary," said she. "It's not the weather for such as you to go to work again yet. It's been very bad, and you needn't get up yet. The boss won't expect you."

The poor boy tried in vain to raise himself to get a glimpse of the sky from the window, but fell back upon his pillow and turned his head to the wall, and the tears trickled down his cheeks. He made no attempt to raise his covered arms to conceal these silent signs of emotion; and he only said, in a low tone, "But mother will come; she'll come—she'll come! Or Mary will. Mary will, I *know*. Mary will come. Oh, Mary, Mary!"

Mary, crouching for shelter from the spray upon the deck

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of the vessel that was carrying her and her sister back toward Ireland, was as fully possessed with a sense of her brother's wretchedness as if she had heard the words which thus escaped his lips a thousand miles away. She reached forth and took from her sister's bosom a letter which was deposited there, and, although she knew it by heart already, commenced to read it again. It ran thus:

"My Dear Mother and Sisters,—Do not be troubled when you read this, which is to tell you that I have been badly hurt, but am alive, thank God! and getting on bravely. I send you twenty pounds, which I have saved of my wages, so that you might come out here. Mother, you'll never regret coming to be with your boy here. It is the country for us. If a man pays his way, and behaves himself, he is treated like a Man.

"It was a wall that fell on my legs, and I'm in the hospital. I don't lack for a friend, God bless him! who sees to all I want. But I want my mother and my sisters. Give my love to Mary, and tell her she must come. Come all of you.

"As I can't move, this letter is written for me by my friend, and your well-wisher,

"STEPHEN MERPRISE."

Upon the deck of the vessel half a dozen other little groups of passengers appeared, who had also been saved from the wreck of the emigrant ship. The captain who had rescued them stood a little aloof, scanning now his encumbered deck and then the horizon. He was a tall, handsome man, but regarded them with an ill-favored eye, out of humor because this unexpected addition of hungry voyagers was too much for his stores, and he would have to put his little ship on short allowance. He was therefore greatly relieved when he saw a bark of American build and rig on the bow; and he made all haste to alter his course so as to hail the stranger.

Soon every one was eagerly scanning the approaching vessel. Sad and pallid countenances were enlivened by curi-

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osity, and those who had been silent exchanged animated conjectures. The ship's crew prepared to lower a boat. The captain hailed the bark, and, after some shouting which seemed to Bridget and Mary hoarse and inarticulate, he turned to his passengers and told them to tumble into the boat.

When the passengers learned that they were to be transferred to the outward-bound vessel they hastened to the gangway. Bridget alone, holding Mary fast by the waist, retained her position. "We're not going," said she, appealing to the captain. "We want to go back home."

"Well, you're nice girls, pretty, and don't eat much. I don't care if you stay with us."

"No," said Mary. "Let me go, Biddy dear. I must go on. Give my love to mother, and tell her the last word I said to you was that."

"You'll not go on alone," said the captain. "You're a young lass to venture that."

"No, Rover will go with me," she replied, running to the gangway, followed by the dog.

As she waited her turn to be lowered into the boat she looked back at her sister, who was sobbing upon the deck, while the captain stood looking at her.

"Rover," said Mary, looking at the dog through her tears, "you shall stay with her; I can spare you better than she."

Mary hurried back to her sister, made Rover lie down at her feet, and fastened him by slipping a rope through his collar and placing the end in her sister's hand. "There, hold him fast," she said. "Don't you let Rover go. You need him most. Rover, lie still. Good-by again;" and, with a kiss to both, the bareheaded girl ran to the gangway, and in an instant disappeared over the side of the vessel. The cries and shouts of the sailors indicated that the boat was cast off. Rover barked and struggled to get free, turned and seized Bridget's arm in his huge jaws, and shook it till the rope dropped from her hand, when he ran to the gangway, tripping up the captain as he passed, and leaped upon the taffrail, where he balanced himself for a moment, and

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then plunged into the water after the retreating boat. Bridget raised herself in time to see the boat, followed by the dog, rise into view and disappear again among the crests of waves, showing her Mary looking back and waving her hand.

The brave girl reached New York in due season, accompanied by Rover, and found the friend of her brother who had written to them of his accident, our old friend, Stephen Merprise, who was now, although a very young man, a mason's foreman. He took her to the hospital, where she incessantly watched over her brother, and when he was well enough to be removed, Stephen found a home for them with himself and sister.

Bridget, notwithstanding her fears, reached her home in safety, and, resisting the urgent requests of her brother and sister, she never consented to try the ocean again.

"Is that the end of your story?" asked the Professor, who had been observed rubbing his spectacles when Chum was describing the patient in the hospital.

"That is all, Sir," replied Chum, rolling up my manuscript and pocketing it, just as if it were his own.

"Well, well," said the Professor, nodding his head in his own meditative way, and pausing. "But I don't see what that has to do with the other story; last month you said this would be a continuation. I don't see the connection."

"The connection between this story and the first one?" said Chum, interrogatively, as if to gain time to answer a puzzling question. "Oh, that will be all made plain next time. I have not finished it yet."

"Now, young gentlemen," the Professor began, tapping to silence the merriment of the class at this reply. "Now, young gentlemen, you've had pretty good scope for your imagination, and I will give you a dryer subject for your next compositions. You have been reading in Political Economy, and I will give you, for your subject, *Money*. You may treat it in an economic point of view, and discuss the precious metals; or in a financial aspect, and elucidate

Money Orders

the currency; or in its social or moral bearings, as a power for good or evil—"the love of money is the root of all evil," you know—there's a text for you. Or the popular phrase, 'the almighty dollar,' will suggest a line of thought; and I should like to have some of you, who can give time to the necessary reading, discuss the relation between the circulating medium and the origin and progress of civilization. In short, young gentlemen, you see that the subject is inexhaustible, and you may treat it in any way you like, so long as you treat it seriously. It is a beautiful subject for essays, Money, Money!"

"Could you give us a little to look at, Sir?" asked Chum, in a low tone, intended for the class only. The boys laughed, and the Professor rapped on his desk. At the end of the lesson and on the eve of dismissal conversation often took some such license.

"What was that inquiry I heard?" said the Professor, looking around the class.

Chum said, in the same undertone, "It's no use to repeat the question. He hasn't got any."

A general but very silent laugh was the only response to the Professor's demand, and he was both too good-natured and too judicious to press it.

"Chum," said I, as the class broke up, "give me my manuscript. You'll *have* to write next time. Why, you're positively imposing on the Professor. It's a shame. You'll catch it yet."

"That's true," said Chum. "It's a shame. I'll go and tell him now."

So he put on a grave expression and walked up to the desk. I followed to hear the conversation. How he could have the face to make the avowal I could not imagine; but he proved to have more impudence than was necessary, for he commenced by asking, in a most respectful and innocent tone:

"If you please, Sir, will you tell me how much you have marked me for my compositions?"

The Professor, whose merit-marks were always a great secret, looked aghast at such a question.

"I beg your pardon, Sir, if it's not proper for me to ask. But all I wanted to know was whether my course had been approved, for—"

"Oh, yes, interrupted the Professor, smiling—"oh, yes; very good story; only I thought you didn't quite finish it. You ought to have written a little more. Now—"

"But," interposed Chum, "I haven't written—"

"You see," persisted the Professor, "in a thing of that kind—in fiction, that is to say—the art of Rhetoric requires that you should satisfy the expectations that you have raised; and if I were to criticise your story I should say that the fate of the hero and the heroine, or the heroes and heroines, has been left rather—well, rather undefined."

"What I was going to say," interposed Chum, "is that I have not yet committed my compositions to writing."

"What! haven't written them?"

"No, Sir, not yet. Writing is very hard for me, and I thought I would begin in the same way as Homer and Demosthenes did."

"But you read them from your paper."

"No, Sir. I couldn't stand up and recite without something before my face; but I have not written them out yet."

"Well, Sir!" said the Professor, "you must write your next one, and must write on the subject I gave the class."

III.—MONEY.

Chum felt that he was fairly cornered. He had acknowledged to the Professor that he had been extemporizing his compositions, and now he was oppressed with the necessity of actually writing. He carried a pencil behind his ear all the time, and sharpened it incessantly. He said he was trying to "bring his ideas to a point." He would sit by the hour, lounging with his feet on the window, whistling, or calling out to the boys on the green; and whenever I spoke to him he would reply, "Don't interrupt me; I am writing my composition."

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At the end of a week he told me it was finished. He pulled out of his pocket a half-sheet of paper, folded like the back of an old letter, and began reading the notes he had jotted there, in a slow, sententious way, very unlike his fluent narrative of the month before.

"Money and United States Express Travelers' Checks are the concentrated essence of Labor. A man who has a thousand dollars has a thousand days' work in his one hand. If he knows its value he can move about among men with the force of a thousand laborers—that is, with a hundred and twenty horse-power.

"To know the force of Money, one must know Labor.

"When one man has Money, and another has not, they contend for its possession. This is Trade, or Robbery, according to circumstances.

"There are three uses of Money—the use of getting it, the use of keeping it, and the use of spending it. Consequently it classifies the bulk of mankind into Money-getters, Money-keepers, and Money-spenders. Except the misers we read of in novels, men do not love money for itself, any more than soup-tickets, or baggage-checks, or promissory notes, or title-deeds. The 'love of money' is the pleasure of mental function in getting or keeping or spending. The sponge and the spendthrift are equally guilty with the miser.

"The class of Money-getters includes merchants, gold-miners, pickpockets, politicians, and professional beggars. Americans are great Money-getters, but they do not care to keep. Hence this is a country of great incomes, but small fortunes.

"The class of Money-keepers is small. Literary men are not found in it. Lawyers are good at keeping money, particularly if it is other people's. Money, like some other essences, has a pungent, sweet taste; but to be kept must be corked tightly. It evaporates in the open air, and the vapor is called Interest. A mortgage is a condensing instrument which enables a Money-keeper to evaporate a Money-spender.

"The class of Money-spenders includes the majority of

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mankind. It is natural to spend money before we get it. We are all born to this, and cost a great deal before we earn anything. The power to get into debt is essential to the happiness of all shiftless people, including most of the governments of Europe. College students and married women, who have no legal capacity to bind themselves, satisfy this propensity by getting their fathers and husbands into debt if possible.

"Money is like gunpowder. To make it carry, charges should be carefully measured and well rammed down. Its explosive power depends on the tightness with which you hold it. Scattered loose it fizzles away with no effect.

"To become wealthy one must both get and keep. To be useful the wealthy man must be also a judicious money-spender."

"That will never do, Chum!" I exclaimed, as he finished reading. "Why do you waste your ideas so? There is matter enough in that for six essays, if it were only written out. Then, too, it is rough. It doesn't read well."

"It seems to me," said Chum, musingly, as if he had not heard my criticism—"it seems to me that it is too long. It took me a great while to write it out."

"Too long!" said I. "What, that scrap? Prof. won't mark you ten for what doesn't take you two minutes to read."

"But if there's enough matter in it, the shorter the better, I should think."

"Not according to the Rules of Rhetoric," said I. "I'm afraid you haven't read up enough in Blair and Kames. The fact is, to make good compositions you must expand your ideas. Blow them up big like a balloon. Beat them out thin like gold-beaters' foil. Spread them over as much surface as you can. When you have hammered them well on one side, turn over and hammer on the other. That's the way to shine in Rhetoric. That's the way they teach the students to write sermons in the Seminary. One little short text can be hammered out forty minutes long."

"Then I shall never write sermons," said Chum. "But

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I don't think my composition is so bad, after all. It is short, and mixed up, as you say, and a little rough; but that is the way with wisdom generally."

"Yes; but people can't digest pure gluten, nor will they take kindly to plain wisdom. You must put some bran into your bread if you would make it most digestible."

Chum was silenced, of course, for the Rules of Rhetoric are unquestionable and unanswerable; but he seemed dissatisfied, and threw down his paper, asking me to fix it for him so as to please the Professor, and went away.

When he returned he was in great glee, and said I needn't do anything about his composition, for he should not read it. It seemed that he had met the President coming out of Faculty meeting, with the Professors, who were laughing, and the President spoke to him, and asked him how he was getting on with the system of Homer and Demosthenes, and wished him success in it.

Chum took this as a license to go on in his own way; so he threw away his pencil, and gave me his paper, saying I might mix as much bran with it as I liked. I was always fond of getting ideas from Chum, and his paper afforded me matter for our capital essays, which I thought were almost as long and good as the "Country Parson's," and when I graduated I made my Commencement speech out of the sentence about the Love of Money.

The story of Chum's extemporizing got around the class; and when we met again the boys were all ready to laugh at whatever he should say.

When he was called on he rose, with his blank paper, and commenced his disquisition on Money, or its equivalent, United States Express Travelers' Checks, as follows:

Mr. Louis Krebb was one of two brothers between whom a large fortune was divided in their youth. Louis was a money-keeper, Harry a money-spender. Louis did not marry the reigning belle, nor keep trotting-horses and a yacht, nor disburse any money without a good consideration, which he

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always set down plainly in his account-book. Harry's fortune leaked away in every direction, until he had nothing which he could call his own, and he became a sort of genteel hanger-on to his elder brother, full of lively anticipations of his death.

The elder brother, Louis, grew old fast. He became whimsical, then queer, then eccentric, and then would have been called deranged, if he had not been so wonderfully rich. He had peevish fits, when he did nothing that he was asked to do, and everything that he was begged not to do; and silent fits, when he would not speak for a day at a time; and gay fits, when he laughed at everything, particularly the troubles of other people. After every monthly balancing of his accounts he had an economic fit, in which he would reduce his household, dismiss a servant, sell a horse or a carriage, close up a room or a suite of rooms, and thus diminish his expenses. Mrs. Krebb was obliged to humor his dismal fancies. She could not but reflect that he would not last much longer; and he was accustomed to console her for yielding to his capricious parsimony by telling her he was saving it all for her.

When Stephen Merprise reached the age of twenty-one, working at his trade in New York, he had with great self-denial saved several hundred dollars out of his earnings; and he said to his sister Susie that they could now fulfill their mother's last wish. Before her death she had spoken of her brother's neglect of her, and had bade Stephen, if he were ever able, to repay the sum that she had received from him, and to be independent of him. In pursuance of this wish Stephen had preserved the value of the little possessions his mother had left, and accumulated his own savings with it. The sum thus obtained he now drew from the savings-bank, purchased United States Express Company's Travelers' Checks, and with his sister went to his uncle's great mansion to transact the most important piece of business they had yet had.

They walked, with care, across the marble hall, and were ushered into the rich man's library. Mr. Krebb was his

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own steward and accountant. The books in his library were chiefly the ledgers in his big safe.

"My name is Merprise," said the young man, "Stephen Merprise; and I have come on a matter of business."

There was no reply.

"Perhaps you remember my mother," said he, almost bitterly, vexed at the indifferent look cast upon him, and easily conjecturing that he was regarded as a beggar.

"My mother," he resumed, raising his voice, after waiting in vain for an answer, "Mrs. Mary Merprise. You assisted her when she was in trouble. We are her children, Sir."

"Oh, no!" said the gentleman, in a hollow voice, that seemed to come from the safe behind him. "I can't do anything more. It was very little—very little I could do then, and now I am positively unable."

"Come, Susie, let's go," said Stephen, turning away.

But Susie stood still, holding her brother's arm, and waited for him to proceed.

"It may have been but little to you, Sir," resumed Stephen, thus quietly held to his purpose, "but it was a great deal to her and to us. And it was her wish that we should call upon you whenever—"

"Ah! dear, dear," the old gentleman broke in. "Call upon me! Oh! everybody calls upon me. I have so many calls that I am under the necessity of declining. Let me give you a piece of advice. There is a rule I have adopted which is, not to give anything to anybody that asks for it. I'll give you anything you want if you only don't ask for it. Beggars, rich or poor, I won't encourage. So I say to 'em, 'If you hadn't asked it, I could have given it to you; but now you've asked me for it, I won't do it.' That's what I say to 'em."

Stephen, biting his lips in silence, produced his Traveler's Check, and with a tremulous hand, for it contained the last dollar he had, held it out to the old man.

"There," said he. "See here. We don't ask for help. You gave my mother money to get a roof for her head. It

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was all you did for her; and we have come to pay it off, as she told me to when she died."

"Ah! you wish to pay the debt? Ah! I recollect. It was a considerable sum. Was it not more than this? Let me see," and he turned over his ledgers. "Family expenses—Country place—Farm—Mills—Charity—that's the account, Charity. Yes, here is the entry to sister Mary, in sundry sums, five hundred dollars. But that was a long time ago."

"Yes, Sir, a long time; but she wished us to *offer* to pay it, at least."

"Oh, of course, very right; but I was thinking of the interest. It is twelve years."

"She mentioned the interest," said Stephen, "and it is all here."

"Twelve years at compound interest will make it—"

"She did not say compound interest. I shall only pay you simple interest. I cannot do more; this is all the money we have in the world. If you don't choose to take it, very well."

"Ah, ah! very well. I will not insist upon it—only I usually get compound interest."

The old man counted off the money and put it in his safe.

"Take a seat, Sir," said he, recovering himself and speaking as if they had just come in. "Pray be seated, Miss Merprise. I am very glad to see you."

"We will not trouble you longer," retorted Stephen. "We have nothing more for you."

"Well, I shall be happy to see you again," said the old man. "You're getting on finely, I don't doubt. You must be a good business man to attend so well to such a case as this. I am obliged to you. To tell the truth, now that I have got it—he! he!—I didn't much expect to get it again. Not much—he! he! Good-morning, good-morning."

Stephen stalked out of the room with Susie blushing upon his arm. They left the house as the old man said to himself, "I like that fellow; he's a little snappish, but he's inde-

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pendent, and he pays his debts. He must be a thrifty fellow. He's my own nephew, too. I wonder where he lives. Yes, he's my own nephew, and that's his sister. I must remember them in my will. Yes," he said, smiting feebly on his desk, "I will give him a *chance* at something, at any rate.

Old Mr. Krebb thus closed his charity account, and ejaculated a wish that he might not have another opportunity to reopen it—a wish that was soon fulfilled.

Stephen and his sister returned to their humble lodging feeling that they had now to begin life anew. Stephen declared that he would never set foot in his uncle's house again. How well he kept the resolution remains to be seen.

It so happened that Mary Cairnes, finding her brother so much better as to be able to be left alone, and their purse so low as to threaten them with speedy distress, had resolved to seek a place as household servant. Susie had endeavored to advise her toward some other employment, but none had been found. Mary said that she must do something immediately, and after advertising in vain she commenced applying from house to house in answer to advertisements of "Servants wanted." By one of those coincidences which sometimes happen, it fell out that while Stephen and Susie were in Mr. Krebb's library Mary Cairnes entered the same house as applicant for the situation of chamber-maid and waitress. Her appearance pleased Mrs. Krebb, who engaged her to enter upon her duties that very evening.

When Stephen heard this he at first opposed it, but unable to assign a reason why his indignation at the selfishness of his uncle should hinder Mary from obtaining good employment he withdrew his objection, and Mary went to her new home.

She found the great house in confusion and consternation, resulting from a sudden shock of paralysis that had fallen on Mr. Krebb. She was immediately sent to call several physicians, and then to inform Mr. Harry, the sick man's brother.

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Mr. Harry returned word to Mrs. Krebb that he would come; and come he did next morning, with a trunk and a servant, and indicated his intention to remain with his brother.

The afflicted wife welcomed even this relief to her solitude in the great house.

"Is he able to attend to business?" asked Mr. Harry the next morning.

"Very little," Mrs. Krebb replied.

"We must assist him," said Mr. Harry. "He has not made his will yet?"

"No; but I think he will not need your assistance. He has expressed his intentions to me repeatedly."

"Ah! has he? But he will need our help to give them form. You and I must unite in this; our interests are the same. His property is very large; it must not be too much cut up. It would be a shame to scatter it. You and I must see to this."

"It will not be much scattered, Mr. Harry. I may as well tell you frankly that he has declared his intention of leaving it to me, as we have no children."

"Ah, I see. You have him under your thumb, and you mean to monopolize him. Come, now, that will never do. Undue influence is enough to set any will aside. We must unite in this, as I said. Our interests are the same. You shall have one-half the personal property for life, besides your dower in the real estate; and I will be content with the other half. *There* is a million and a half apiece. That's fair. I've no doubt he would agree to that."

"Indeed, Sir!" exclaimed the wife, "I can not discuss such a question with you."

"Well," urged the brother, "I will give you this house and the country place for life," and he waved his hand as if he were generously disposing of his own. "You shall have them both for life. You shall not be disturbed."

"I can not listen to any proposals upon the subject," said Mrs. Krebb. "I know my husband's intentions, and

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I shall not be a party to any attempt to influence him to take any other course than that which he prefers."

"But consider," urged Mr. Harry; "there are the Merprises; one of them is a regular vagabond, and the others are of no account at all, I understand. They'll come in for a big share if you and I don't agree upon something."

"A vagabond! Who? Where?" exclaimed Mrs. Krebb; and after turning away her face to conceal her emotion, she continued, "I am astonished. Is he—I thought—I—I am astonished to hear you speak so of—of my husband's relatives." She hid her face in her handkerchief and left the room.

Mrs. Krebb was not a person to yield so important a point as her husband's will without vigorous contest. Ten minutes after this conversation she called the waitress, and said to her:

"Mary Cairnes, take a cab and tell the driver to go to No. 51 Wall Street. Go upstairs to Mr. Search's office. See him yourself, even if you have to wait. Give him this card; and after you have given it him tell him that *I* sent you, and as Mr. Krebb is very ill, I beg him to ask for *me* when he comes to the house. For *me*, you understand, Mary."

The card contained a line saying that Mr. Krebb was ill, and wished the lawyer to call immediately to receive instructions on a matter of great importance. Mary took it and disappeared.

At about the same moment Mr. Harry rang for his servant, and said to him: "John, find out quietly down stairs who is my brother's lawyer, and go to his office immediately, and tell him that Mr. Louis Krebb is ill, and must see him directly. Tell him to ask for *me* when he comes."

In a few moments John returned and said to his master, "Search is the lawyer's name, in Wall Street, but Mrs. Krebb has just sent a messenger for him."

"Ah ha! She has! Very good, very good. But that makes no difference. Go yourself, instantly; and

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mind, now; see that you get there first. Remember, he is to ask for *me* when he comes."

Having dispatched his servant on this important errand, Mr. Harry went softly up stairs and entered his brother's chamber. The sick man turned his eyes upon him as he approached.

Mr. Harry motioned to the attendant to retire, and seated himself at the bedside. With the manner of one who would express an affectionate salutation, he laid his hand upon the helpless hand of his brother. After bidding him good-morning he talked some minutes upon general subjects, and then opened the topic of immediate interest.

"Mrs. Krebb is very anxious that you should make your will. Can I assist you in any way?"

No answer; but a rolling of the eyes, which looked as if the old man desired to shake his head, but had not the power.

"She has her own ideas of what she wishes you to do; what she wants you to give her; and, doubtless, her own ideas of what she will do with it when she gets it. Do you understand me?"

No answer; but an almost imperceptible raising of the eyebrows, which looked as if the old man desired to nod his head but could not.

"She is still a young woman, and she has naturally her ambitions and her attachments. She has never forgotten her old admirer. I see *that*, since you are sick. She is very attentive to you, is she not? Does every thing you want? Yes? Certainly. And she has often told you what she wants *you* to do, I don't doubt. She has set her heart, she tells me, upon having all your property. She has sent for a lawyer just now to get you to make your will. Perhaps he will be here soon. If I can help you, or if I am wanted for any purpose, just let me know."

The old man attempted to speak; his jaw trembled and wavered without making any articulate sound. But on his face appeared a slight semblance of the grim half-smile with

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which he had looked on Stephen when he announced his rule that what was asked for he would never give.

Having thus kindly prepared the way for Mrs. Krebb, the affectionate brother withdrew.

Soon Mr. Search rang at the door. Mr. Search was a young old bachelor. He was a mediocre lawyer, and had adopted conveyancing as his specialty in the profession, it being his ambition to draw as many mortgages as possible for somebody, and then marry the mortgagee's daughter. Mortgages enough had he drawn for Mr. Krebb, who was his "rich client;" but Mr. Krebb had no daughter—only a wife.

It becomes a lawyer who draws wills to provide for all possible contingencies, and he gets in the habit of forecasting the future of his client's family. Mr. Search thought of the handsome wife of the sick man; then thought of her as handsome widow; and finally decided that he would ask for *her*, as she had requested, and not for Mr. Harry.

Mrs. Krebb received him graciously, thanked him with some feeling for his expressions of grief at her husband's alarming condition, and then entered at once on the business before them.

"He has often expressed to me his intentions. They are very kind toward me—could not be more so—he intends to leave me every thing; but his brother is here now, and he is bent upon obtaining something. He wishes to impose his own interests upon my husband; and Mr. Krebb is in such a shocking state that I can not allow him to be disturbed. So I thought I ought to send for you immediately. I knew no one else in whom I could so well confide."

"I thank you, ma'am," said the lawyer. "I should say to you, frankly, that Mr. Harry Krebb had already sent for me when your messenger arrived. But I need only add that, with me, your wishes are of course paramount to all others."

"He sent for you! What right has he? Is he to be present?"

"He has no *right*, ma'am. I have received an expression of Mr. Krebb's wishes through yourself. As a professional

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man, as well as in the capacity of confidential friend, I may say that I shall, under the present painful circumstances, regard your own lips as the most proper and authoritative channel of communicating to me the instructions of the lamented—I would say of Mr. Krebb, whose speechless condition is so much to be lamented. In his condition you are the proper person to make known to me his wish for my attendance; and I have no hesitation in assuring you, personally, that I am ready to disregard the requests of any others, until Mr. Krebb himself shall indicate some other wish."

"Let us then go up stairs at once."

"One moment," said the lawyer; "it is a delicate matter to receive instructions for a will under such circumstances. You may rely upon me, Madam, that I comprehend the situation. It is essential that he shall express freely his *own* wishes. His *own* wishes, you understand, you know them very well. Above all, we must prevent him from being unduly influenced by the will of others. As he is speechless, and can only answer by signs of assent or dissent, it will be necessary that you should name the various objects of bounty which you think he would wish to have remembered, the various sums or items of property which you may have heard him say, or may have reason to think he would give, and I shall gather from him his instructions in a positive manner. Then I will come again to-morrow, with the will engrossed—"

"To-morrow! No, Sir; it must all be done to-day. It must, indeed. There is no time to be lost."

The old man lay in his bed, and his eyes were closed. Within that little sallow head, which looked startlingly dark upon the great expanse of white bedding, were working little currents of nervous power which even now could do more, in one volition, negative or affirmative, than three millions of day-laborers. One roll of those half-glazed eyes, or a shrinking of those puckered eyebrows, could move that which the sheer force of a hundred men in a hundred years could not more than replace. What depths

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of consciousness there might be in this mind it was now impossible to say. The generous powers were long unused and dormant. Those phases of consciousness, through which the soul is brought into relation with ideals and the energizing power of a Future and a Superior had never had room for existence in this brain. The whole force of its susceptibilities had long been engrossed in one direction.

A great ruling passion tones the whole mind and forms the back-ground upon which all incidental and collateral thoughts are wrought out. Every other feeling partakes of the nature of the dominant power. In Mr. Krebb's mind there was no charity but a pecuniary charity; no filial or fraternal relation that did not involve the idea of heirship and succession. The feeling of approbation implied the bestowal of money; and that of displeasure implied the withholding or withdrawal of it. Gratitude did not exist, for everything had its consideration, and more than that was a superfluity. Resentment was measured in dollars and cents. His whole consciousness had been pecuniary and possessory.

Mrs. Krebb had now the delicate task of reminding him that the period of income had passed, and the time of out-go had come. She was not aware what a shock she was to communicate to this possessory consciousness in proposing to reverse the order of its nature, and in one act to negative all that it had hitherto attained.

Five minutes after Mrs. Krebb and the lawyer had entered the sick-chamber Mr. Harry, becoming impatient and suspicious that Mr. Search might enter without calling for him, as in fact he had already done, took his newspaper and chair and went to the door of the sick-chamber, where he seated himself as a sentinel. "There!" said he; "now she can't get in without me. It would be just like her to try."

Meanwhile the wife, already within the room, began her part in the process of drawing a will out of the dumb old man.

By dint of indifferent questions, such as whether he

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wished to leave any thing to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, or the Hospital for Sick Paupers, or the Washington Monument, the will got on through two clauses by which some trivial bequests were made. Thus far the old man had only disposed of two or three thousands, which did not hurt him much. It was only pinching off a twig or two.

Mrs. Krebb came to a pause after she had named everybody but herself, and looked at the lawyer.

"Go on," said he, quietly.

"And who will you give the rest to, my dear? You know you have often said you meant it for me. Will you give it all to me, my dear? All you are worth?"

The old man was immovable. It was like proposing to cut him up by the roots.

"Come, deary! answer me," urged Mrs. Krebb, feeling that she must go on; and she knelt by his side, and leaned over him, and kissed his yellow forehead—very softly, lest the lawyer should hear it. "Come, deary! will you say yes? That's my love. Yes! Mr. Search, I think he said yes. Oh! I must move; you can not see. His eyebrows moved a little. I must ask him again."

"Come, my love, you must say it again, so that Mr. Search can see it. That's my dear. Yes, he says he means it all for me."

The old man's assent, feeble at first, was repeated again and again, more vigorously.

"Do I understand you, Sir," said Mr. Search, "to say that you wish to leave all the rest and residue, of whatever name and nature, both real and personal, to your beloved wife, to have and to hold in her own right?"

"He says yes! he says yes!" exclaimed Mrs. Krebb.

The old man distinctly signaled yes, but the same grim half-smile rested on his bloodless features. Could it mean, this time, that what was asked for he would not give? His thoughts were his own secret. He certainly did say yes.

Money Orders

"There!" said Mrs. Krebb, with a quiet triumph. "That's all. We need not trouble you any more, love. I'll go and call the witnesses."

"Stay," said the lawyer.

But Mrs. Krebb was already at the door. She opened it and looked out. Instantly she shrank back again, but not quickly enough to prevent Mr. Harry from springing up and thrusting his foot within the door.

"What are you here for?"

"What are you here for?"

"Go away for a little while; you can not see Louis now."

"If you are in, I shall come in."

"You've no right to come in."

"You'll not dare to refuse me."

"I do refuse."

"That's enough for me. Then I come in without leave." And forcing the door open, he nearly tipped his sister-in-law into the corner as he entered.

The sick man witnessed this pleasant little contest for the post of honor by his bedside. To judge by his cynical smile, it seemed rather to amuse than to vex him. "They want me to make a will," said he to himself, "and I'll humor them. They'll have all my property if I don't make one, and I'll make one that will vex them. I'll trap 'em, the buzzards!"

Mrs. Krebb and Mr. Harry each moved rapidly to the bedside, as if contesting for the possession of the half-animated body, and stood there, alternately doting upon him and glaring at each other.

Mr. Search, not knowing what else to do, went on with his questions. The old man directed his eager gaze first at the lawyer, whom he was answering, and then at his wife and brother, watching the expressions on their faces.

"You have given all your property to your beloved wife," said the lawyer, resuming the interrupted instructions.

The old man turned his grim smile upon his brother and signaled "Yes."

"What, Louis!" exclaimed he, with an oath—"to her?"

The old man, as if a new passion reanimated his powers, nodded—actually nodded.

"You're crazy," said Harry.

Louis made as if he would shake his head.

Mr. Harry threw up his hands as if all was over, and threw himself into his chair, while Mrs. Krebb beamed with triumph.

"Do you give it to her without condition or limitation?" continued the lawyer.

The old man turned his looks toward his wife, and, enjoying her attention, signaled "No."

"What condition do you impose?"

He still smiled grimly on his wife's anxious, inquiring face, but indicated no reply.

"Is the bequest for life?"

"No."

"For a term of years?"

"No."

"During widowhood?"

The old man nodded.

"Do I understand you that her right ceases if she marry again?"

The old man, without taking his eyes off her face, smiled and nodded, as if to say, "How do you like that, dearest?"

The wife hid her face in her hands and threw herself back into a chair, and Mr. Harry jumped to his feet again.

"And what disposition do you make of it in case she should marry again?" continued the lawyer, coolly.

No answer.

"Do you give it to me, Louis?" appealed his brother.

Louis looked keenly at him, and slowly nodded.

Mr. Harry cast a glance of triumph on his sister-in-law, as he pressed his inquiry, "You give it *all* to me—*all*?"

"Yes."

"He gives it all to me if she marries again," said Mr. Harry, turning to the lawyer. "You understand?"

"I will take the instructions myself, if you please, Sir,"

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returned the lawyer. "I understand you to say," continued he, addressing the testator, "that, in case of the marriage of Mrs. Krebb, you give your estate to Mr. Harry Krebb—upon any conditions?"

"Yes."

"What conditions do you wish? Do they relate to his use of the property?"

"No."

"To his own state or condition?"

"Yes."

"What—marriage?"

"No."

"Life?"

"Yes."

"Do you limit the gift to a life-estate?"

"No."

"Do you mean to make the gift take effect only in case he should be living at the time of such marriage?"

"Yes."

"But if he should not be living how would you dispose of it? Do you wish to give it to any of the persons who have been mentioned before?"

"Yes."

"To whom?—the children of your sister?"

"Yes."

"What are their names? Stephen, I believe—"

"Yes."

"And Susan?"

"Yes."

"Now," said the lawyer, recapitulating to make this capricious purpose distinct, "you give all your estate to your wife, *provided* she does not marry again. If she marries again, her right ceases, and you give the estate to your brother, *provided* he be then living. If he be not then living, you give it to Stephen and Susan in equal shares."

"Yes, yes!" nodded the old man. And with an enthusiasm of malice he looked from wife to brother, and from brother to wife, to watch the effect he had produced in

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thus hedging their expectations with contingencies. He had every reason to be gratified with the immediate effect of his ingenuity. He had completely embarrassed them both.

It occurred, of course, to the lawyer that he might perhaps modify these intentions of the old man if he should point out some of the legal effects of such provisions. But whatever personal fancies he may have cherished when he commenced to draw a will in favor of the anticipated widow were quite cooled by the shocking provision or condition that she should remain unmarried. His mind accordingly had reverted to its proper professional bearings, and he now contemplated the vast estate with whose owner he was dealing rather as a fine subject for litigation than as the marriage portion of a handsome widow. In this point of view he naturally thought, as some others have before him, that the worse the will the better the lawsuit. He accordingly drew out the provisions directed by the testator, and after a few minutes' writing they held the old man up in his bed, put the pen into his motionless fingers, and the wife moved the tip so as to make a cross upon the paper.

Mr. Search went away rubbing his hands, and saying that that will would keep him in business as long as he lived, and that he would not care much on which side he should be retained.

Old Mr. Krebb lay back upon his pillow, chuckling at the confusion he had caused to his wife and brother.

It never occurred to the old man that it was possible for his brother to gain by marriage what his wife would lose by marriage, and that a compromise of a connubial nature would smooth it all over delightfully.

Mrs. Krebb, who would not otherwise have thought of the question of marriage, at least before the time of half-mourning, retired to her room to ponder on the subject, and vainly endeavored to feel satisfied with the fortune and the obligation of widowhood.

Mr. Harry, a little more shrewd, said to himself, "I've heard somewhere that a man may not marry his deceased wife's sister. I wonder if a woman can marry her deceased

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husband's brother. I'll ask Mr. Search next time I see him. If I can do that, it will make all right after all. The money's what I want. Hang the woman, but I'll have the money."

Here Chum rolled up his paper and sat down.

The Professor drew a long breath and said: "Very good! Queer will that—very queer. But I doubt whether that will hold water. Are you sure of your law there?"

"I believe, Sir," replied Chum, gravely, "that it is our Rhetoric, not our Law, that is in question here. One can't do justice to two such sciences at once, Sir—at least not in Junior year."

The Professor laughed with the class, and did not press his criticism further.

"What subject shall we take next month?" asked Chum, as the class showed signs of breaking up without having received any announcement of a subject.

"Choose for yourself," replied the Professor, shuffling his papers into the desk and hiding his face behind the lid.

"Choose for yourself," repeated Chum to me, in a tone heard by the class. "That's a good subject. That will finish off my heroine very well."

IV.—CHOOSE FOR YOURSELF.

While Chum had been telling stories instead of reading composition I had amused myself with taking notes in shorthand. I wrote out these notes at my leisure, and presented him with the manuscript. He grasped my hand and said not a word.

"There you are," said I. "You can send in your manuscript now, and save your standing."

"You're a glorious fellow," said he. "And I take back all the disrespectful things I've said about your old inkstand."

"The apology is perfectly satisfactory," said I, for whom he really meant it. "Now sit down and tell me your story for next month, and we will have *that* written out

beforehand. After that, Chum, you must write your own."

This was the way I came to report Chum's stories.

On composition day he marched in with all his papers; and when he was called on he rose with veritable manuscript to read from, instead of blank sheets.

"There seems to have been some mistake," he said, by way of preface, "about our subject this month. I observe that the other members of the class have written on various subjects. I have taken the one designated by you, Sir."

"By me!" exclaimed the Professor.

"Yes, Sir; as I understood you. My subject is, 'Choose for Yourself.'"

OLD MR. KREBB, having made his will in such a way as to bother the dear kin who begged him to make it, lay back contented in his bed, and after lingering helpless a short time, suddenly died. His widow occupied the seclusion of her mourning in endeavoring to decide whether she would continue a widow and enjoy the three millions, or accept some husband and lose the three millions. Mr. Krebb's brother occupied himself in wishing the widow would marry somebody straightway, and in wondering how soon it would do to offer his own hand, and thus endeavor to secure the fortune between them upon the best terms for himself that she might grant.

Soon after the old man made his will Mary Cairnes, the pretty Irish girl, who had been called in as a witness to the execution of the instrument, went home to spend a few hours with her invalid brother. When I say "home" I mean a snug lodging on the fourth floor of a retired tenement in the upper part of the town, where Stephen Merprise and his sister Susan had their little apartments.

The four sat all the evening in Stephen and Susie's sitting-room. Susie was sewing. Stephen, as usual, was at work over his books, for he had always kept up his love of reading, although daily engrossed in his trade. Mary spent the evening in sewing for her brother, occasionally pausing to tell Stephen the meaning of some French phrase—she having brought some acquaintance with that language

from the Continent, where she had once spent a season in the service of an English family—or to tell him of some English or Irish town she had been in.

The convalescent brother retired early, and, leaving his door ajar, asked Mary to sing him to sleep, as she had often done since she had come to him. She sang, in a sweet voice, some quaint native songs, which put him soon to sleep, but quite waked up Stephen, who had begun to grow sleepy over his books.

Mary then prepared to return. "I must go back to my palace now," she said gayly. "Oh! how short an evening is when there is only one in a week! It will be a long week till I see these dear walls again."

"We'll find you something better to do yet," said Stephen. "Why, you could teach! Here you've been teaching me half the evening. Why couldn't she teach, Susie?"

"Not in *this* country, I fear," said Mary. "It would not be what they'd expect. I'm awkward enough where I am now. Every thing is strange, so strange, here."

Stephen insisted on escorting Mary back to the residence of his late uncle. She was a brave girl, and declared herself quite able to go alone, but when they were fairly in the street she was so timid that she hardly could muster courage to take the arm which he offered her. What an inconsistent, boasting, fearful little heart—to brave the world, and then to be afraid of Stephen, only Stephen! And then, after she had taken the arm, there was another difficulty worse than the first. It was so very silent. It was not one of your noisy streets, full of bustle and distraction. On the contrary, it was a quiet, retired way, rather lonely to walk through alone. But Stephen marched along and said never a word; and it got to be very silent indeed. Oh, for a noise, if it were only a cart; something to introduce a subject, no matter what!

Mary kept her eyes on the ground, just as if it were necessary to do so on a bright moonlight night and on a good pavement! At last it seemed to the eyes which were

looking down as if they were being looked at in turn by other eyes that were a little above.

Now that, of course, is very embarrassing. And the case becomes still more embarrassing sometimes. For observe, that when one's face is half averted it is difficult to see the eyes that are thus half curtained by the eyelids; you must lean forward a little to do so; and then, if the eyes should look up just at that moment, if the fair curtains should be suddenly parted, and the inhabitant within look out upon you, you would feel caught, as it were. Wouldn't you, now? Come, be frank about it. Wouldn't you feel a little as if you had been peering in at some casement, and the fair inmate had appeared within and detected you attempting to spy out the contents of her boudoir?

Very well; then you know how Stephen felt when Mary looked up.

Now I am not able to state any reason why one pair of innocent eyes may not look at another pair of innocent eyes without you and I spending a whole page upon the phenomenon.

I go further, and say that I am unable to define the process by which one pair of eyes knows that the other pair of eyes is *looking in*—is not merely casting a casual glance upon the casement, as it were, and thinking, perhaps, of nothing at all, but actually looking in.

Now this is a more important question than it seems to be, for I have a theory which may explain it. In accordance with what I have read in scientific works of the purely mechanical, chemical, and electrical constitution of man, I have conjectured that when two pairs of eyes thus meet so that the axes of vision of each precisely coincide, as they must do in the act of looking *in*, we have two rays of light proceeding in opposite directions in precisely the same path; and these rays—whether undulatory or corpuscular makes no difference to my theory—these rays must agitate and perturb each other in a manner quite peculiar to the precise conjunction in which they meet, and it is not strange that a ray of light, perturbed or agitated in a pe-

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culiar manner, should when impinging upon the retina, affect the nerves of vision in a peculiar manner, and produce interior effects in the cerebral convolutions of the most peculiar character.

If man be such a perfect, admirable machine, this theory can easily be tested by a simple experiment, which I mean to try. A pair of glass eyes should be taken, and placed so as to cast their rays of reflection precisely in the same path as the axes of vision of some susceptible young person. If it should be found that a pair of glass eyes, or, better still, two little round mirrors, under the proper conditions of position and light, should produce the same peculiar excitement of the retina, and awaken in the mind the tenderest emotions, then my theory will be established; and we shall, moreover, have a triumphant confirmation of the mechanical, chemical, and electrical theory of human nature.

Now when one is caught looking in at windows, it is very proper to make an apology; and the best apology is to have an errand, or to pretend to have one, which is sometimes better still.

So Stephen spoke. But he did not speak very boldly, either. He said, "I should like to know what you were thinking about, Mary?"

What a foolish question! And under such circumstances, too. To pretend that *that* was what he was "looking in at the window" for! If that was what he wanted, why didn't he ask her at the outset in a straightforward way, instead of looking at her rosy face and drooping eyelids for whole minutes at a time without saying a word?

"Couldn't you tell me, Mary?" he added, gently, after waiting for a reply.

Now why should he say "Mary"? Because, mind you, nobody else was near; and if he had not, she still would have understood that she was addressed. But "Mary" is a very pretty name, and it sounded very prettily as he said it.

"I was thinking," said Mary, "I—I was thinking that—that you did not come to your uncle's house. I was wondering why you did not go to see your aunt now."

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"I never went there but once, when Mr. Krebb was living," returned the young man. "I was not welcome. He was very busy with his money, and he did not want to see us. That's a good reason, is it not? They never cared for us. I don't suppose my aunt knows we are in New York."

"That *was* a good reason," replied the girl. But *now*? Now he is gone, and his poor wife is left alone. She has a great many acquaintances, but I don't think she has many friends. It's a very large house, but it's nearly all shut up, dark and deserted. When I think how kind you were to my brother when he was in trouble, yes, and to me too, when I came all alone and destitute to take care of him—you see I was wondering why you did not go to comfort your aunt."

"Do you think I ought to go?"

"I did not say that. I said I was wondering why you did not."

"I said I *would* not. I said I would *never* enter the house again—never. But Susie says we ought to go."

"Then I think so, too," said Mary, looking up with a frank smile straight into the eyes that had embarrassed her before.

Stephen left his companion at the basement-door of the great house, and bade her good-night. The next day with Susie he rang at the front-door, and was shown into the parlor.

Mrs. Krebb received them with unexpected cordiality. After some time spent in conversation about the death of Mr. Krebb, and in recalling reminiscences of the days when Stephen and his sister had been her pupils, Mrs. Krebb led the conversation to the subject of the will, and astonished her young relatives by explaining its provisions.

"That's a singular will," said Stephen.

"Yes," said Mrs. Krebb; "his brother interposed and induced him to change his original intentions. I think it was all owing to his interference."

"It was quite unnecessary to mention *my* name in it," said Stephen. "Perhaps you may not know that a short time

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ago, in pursuance of my mother's dying request, I offered Mr. Krebb the amount she had received from him, with interest. I did not expect he would receive it; but he did. If it had pleased him to return that amount to me I should have thought it very just; but I never shall claim any thing else."

Mrs. Krebb's eyes sparkled at the idea of Stephen's so readily disavowing any expectations under the will, and she replied, "Indeed, *that* shall be repaid. It would be very generous in you to be satisfied with what I am sure is no more than justice. Mr. Krebb was so businesslike in all his ways. But I am sure he meant no unkindness."

"No," replied Stephen, "I did not mean to ask even that. It would have been very well for him to have provided for it; but he did not; so let us say no more about it."

This seemed to close this subject of conversation. They talked afterward of Mr. Krebb's illness; and Mrs. Krebb inquired, with much kindness of manner, into their circumstances, and Stephen's prospects in business. Here he was quite at home; and from his enthusiastic accounts of his work, and his hopes of advancement, one would hardly have inferred that he had just stripped himself of the last dollar of his savings to repay the uncle.

Mrs. Krebb made very warm offers of assistance and friendship to the young people, for which Stephen thanked her, while Susie looked around upon the grand parlor, with its paintings and its piano and wished the will had been a little different, as it might have been just as well as not.

"No, I thank you," said Stephen, after Mrs. Krebb had said that they must be friends, and had offered to lend him money for his business. "I thank you; but I could not borrow. I had better work my own way, and not too fast."

"And is there nothing I can do for you?" said the woman with three millions to the youth with nothing. Susie fancied that she became perhaps a little more earnest in

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offering as Stephen became more distinct in declining.

"Yes, ma'am; there is one thing. Could you give Mary Cairnes two evenings out in the week?"

"Mary Cairnes! my waitress! are you a friend of hers?"

Stephen blushed, and Susie interposed. "Yes, auntie—If I may call you so. You see, her brother is one of Stephen's workmen, and he was badly hurt, and Stephen was taking care of him when Mary came out from Ireland to nurse him. They have been very unfortunate. And she has only the one evening to see him. He is better now, but she needs more time to care for him."

"Yes, she shall have two evenings a week, or three, if Susie asks it," replied Mrs. Krebb, smiling.

So they came away.

"I should like to live in that house," said Susie. "I never saw anything so finely furnished. Such a library, too, for you, Stephen, in the back-parlor."

"I'm sorry to hear you say so," said Stephen. "I don't want it. We'll have one of our own one of these days."

"But what a will!" said Susie. "I can't think of your working so hard without wishing that his brother was—was dead, and auntie was married again. It's positively wicked, I know; but I can't help it."

"Then don't think of it," said Stephen. "We'll not go there again."

"Why couldn't he have divided his property, and made us all happy, instead of tantalizing every body with it?"

"What right has any man, Susie, after he is dead and gone, to control what is left in the world, and ought to be at the disposal of the living?"

"It was his own, Stephen, to do with as he pleased."

"Yes, Susie, while he lived; but it is not his now. And we don't know what would please him now. Selfishness perpetuates itself; but if it pleases him now to look back from another world, and see how he has tied the hands and entangled the happiness of living, active people for years to come—for a lifetime—if that pleases him now, he must be among the bad."

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"Oh, Stephen, don't talk so!"

"Yes, Susie; it may have been his will when he made it, but I don't believe it's his will now. It's a vicious will. Why should the law give a dead man arms to reach back from another world and hold on with an unchangeable grip to the possessions he left behind, and ought to have relinquished here? Why should he have the power to hold on to his will when he no longer has the power to change it?"

"If he had divided his property it would have united us all," said Susie; "but he has forbidden the division, and we are all divided instead."

"Yes," said Stephen. "Money earned is a clear property, but money bequeathed is like treasure-trove—the finders never agree. Mere luck makes friends quarrel. Here, now, is a happy family! Mrs. Krebb wishes Mr. Harry would die, and Mr. Harry wishes Mrs. Krebb would get married; and both of them hate us, I dare say, because if we were not in existence they would have fared better. And we wish them both to forfeit the property, and begin to despise the memory of the old man who left it. The law is wrong that permits his old skeleton to stand for years in the family circle, directing what we shall do and what we shall not do. The worst of it is, we can't help ill-feeling. It is irresistible. It would cost us three millions to feel like Christians."

"We *will* feel like Christians," said Susie, putting her little foot with emphasis on the pavement; "and I wish our names were not mentioned in the will."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Stephen; "and now let us forget it all."

If you think that Stephen was unnaturally philosophical in this you are quite correct, and he half thought so himself. His mind did not long hold to the resolution he had just formed. He soon began to see more of the other side of the question, and the more real and tangible the great fortune seemed as he thought of it, the more vexatious seemed the freak that had debarred his sister and himself from their lawful and immediate share in his

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uncle's estate. He shortly came to the conclusion that, although he would not care for it himself, it was his duty as toward Susie to assert some claim, if any were sustainable.

He was in this mood when old Mr. Harry Krebb called upon him to endeavor to enlist his co-operation in the event of a lawsuit. Mr. Krebb gave such an account of the circumstances under which the will was made, and of the old man's weakness and eccentricity, and of the legal opinions he had obtained to the effect that the will itself was void on this account, that he induced Stephen to consent to join him in bringing an action to set the will aside.

In giving this consent Stephen was, perhaps, actuated more by the desire of protecting his sister's rights than of asserting his own; and he made it a condition that he should not be called on to give a day of time or a dollar of money to the litigation. Mr. Harry was much pleased to secure thus the entire management of the case to himself; and Stephen went through the formality of making oath to the bill of complaint, in which it was alleged that he was informed and believed that the testator was not of sound mind and memory, and was not capable of making a will. Mr. Harry's lawyer, who attended to administer the oath, congratulated the young man upon being a plaintiff in one of the greatest lawsuits of the age; and, if the truth were told, Stephen, with all his appearance of indifference, felt as if he had taken another step upon the ladder of life when he saw his name affixed to the paper in *Krebb against Krebb*, and thought of the possible consequences of such an act.

As for Susie, she was at first more pained at the idea of combining to prosecute her aunt than pleased at the hope of success, but she soon reconciled herself to the position of a plaintiff, and wondered how soon they would go to court and hear the verdict.

As for Mary, imagine how glad she was to get two evenings a week with her brother. When Susie told her

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of the brilliant contingencies which opened before them tears of joy filled her eyes, which always beamed with gratitude upon those who had befriended her brother. But Stephen thenceforward found her less social and communicative than before, and more impatient than ever that her brother should be able to move.

Old Harry Krebb, armed with his bill of complaint, and the appropriate writ or process to commence the great suit of *Krebb* against *Krebb*, went one fine day to call upon his sister-in-law. He determined that she should be either his wife or his defendant, and he resolved to press a suit in one sense or the other. To make a sure thing of it, the crusty old fellow was prepared to threaten as well as to coax.

Mr. Harry dined at his club, and spent an hour over his wine in meditating on the policy he should pursue in conversing with the widow. The deep fellow got so deep that when he rose to go and seek Mrs. Krebb he was full of love and law in a strange mixture. At first he had been uncertain whether it were wiser to threaten first and offer afterward, or to offer first and threaten afterward. This difficulty disappeared as he got on with his wine, and he soon found the most opposite sentiments comfortably commingled. In the fullness of anticipated triumph he said to himself, as he swaggered along toward her house, "Sink or swim, marry or sue, bride or defendant, kisses or costs, by Heaven I'll have my share of the money!"

On this swelling wave of exulting resolution this brave but poor lover was floated into the presence of the widowed millionaire.

"What does this fellow want?" thought Mrs. Krebb, as Mr. Harry swayed across the room, kissed her hand, and made as if he would sink on one knee before her.

"Dearest Margaret," said he, "I have come to avow my heart, and to propose a happy settlement of all our differences, to declare the sentiments with which your beauty and worth—your worth, I mean personal worth, I do not allude to property—have inspired me."

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The horror with which the lady drew back from him glimmered dimly into the excited mind of the lover, and admonished him that he was getting on too fast.

"Yes, dearest one—for so I must call you, and I know you will not forbid me till you have heard me. Yes! I have come to tell you of the dilemma in which you stand, and to offer myself to deliver you, if you will accept me.

"Yes, dearest, there is a combination—there is a lawsuit about to be commenced, to set aside the very extraordinary will your late husband made. I am informed and believe, as deponent saith, that it was fraudulent and void."

"Who says that?" said Mrs. Krebb, indignantly. "How dare you?"

"*Deponent* saith," responded the old fellow, with a shrewd look. "It's only the language of the law, my dear; the law talks very bad, sometimes; and the worst of it is that what the judge asks the witness must tell. I was in the room when the will was made. It will not be my fault if I am made to appear against your interests."

Mrs. Krebb was silent.

"Your late husband," continued the brother, "has condemned you to be a widow, and left you to fight your battles alone. I can set you free in the sweet bonds of matrimony. You would not lose anything by uniting your fortunes with mine. Together we could defy any opposition."

"I do not believe a word of it," said the widow. "There is no one but yourself to interfere with me. The Merprises are content. What do you want? What do you mean to do?"

"Ah! my dear Margaret, I must either agree with you or agree with the rest of the family. I must either stand by the will or yield it up. I come to you to propose that—to propose—yes, in short, to propose—that's it. If you will have me, I am yours; and we can easily arrange details about the property on equable terms. But otherwise I must go against the will and set it aside. In other

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words, my dear, I come with a ring in one hand and a writ in the other, and you must choose for yourself."

Mrs. Krebb broke into a merry laugh, during which her odd suitor stood rather sheepishly awaiting her answer. She was divided between indignation and a sense of the ludicrous, and she half laughed, half scowled her reply:

"Show me the writ and show me the ring, and I will choose very soon."

"There's the writ," said Mr. Harry, reluctantly drawing it out. "I haven't any ring here."

"Never mind the ring to-night," responded the lady. "Leave me now, and I will give you my answer to-morrow, after I have read this."

"I can not leave it. I must take it with me."

"No! If you want my answer leave it, and I will respond to your proposal to-morrow. And now good-night Harry," she added, looking at him with momentary toleration, and offering her hand.

She led him to the door and shut him out into the hall. She heard him groping for his hat and stick, for though the hall was lighted his eyes were hazy; and at last he closed the outer door, and his uncertain feet descended the front steps.

"It seems to me that your story is rather long," interposed the Professor, rapping on his desk to enforce the interruption. "The hour is up."

"Let him go on," said the boys, in a general chorus.

"It is rather long," said Chum, gravely, "or rather it was, but it is getting shorter every minute."

"Hm!" ejaculated the Professor. "It is time for me to go," looking at his watch. "Any of the class can go who wish to. Can't you tell us in a few words how it ends? It's a pity to leave it there."

"In a few *minutes* I can, Sir," responded Chum. "The Death and Marriage column, you know, is always a short one."

"Well! well! Go on. You may as well read it all while you're about it."

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Nobody moved to leave the class-room; and we all settled ourselves to hear the conclusion. Chum resumed his reading:

We left old Mr. Harry descending the steps of the Krebb mansion. On his way home the half-tipsy man was run over in the street, and did not live to receive an answer to the dilemma which he had proposed to the widow.

The decease of this dashing old beau was lamented only by his creditors—those faithful friends who hold that while there is life there is hope, and who never say die unless they can get their money by saying it. These—for many such friends he had—mourned his untimely end. Mrs. Krebb felt unspeakably relieved, and even Stephen and Susie thought with satisfaction that one obstacle was removed.

It will not be expected that one who is not yet even a bachelor of arts should be able adequately to describe the play of those tender emotions which undergraduates are presumed never to have experienced. I must therefore say bluntly, as a parrot would blurt it out, not knowing what it means, that Stephen was in love with Thomas's pretty sister, and Mary has since as good as acknowledged that if it had not been for the bugbear of a fortune hanging over his head they would have made a match of it straightway. But she, blushing girl, had her own ideas about station in life, and keeping her own place; and while she perhaps confessed to herself that she liked Stephen poor, and even Stephen as a master-workman, she was quite disconcerted by the thought of Stephen a millionaire. Stephen himself was not long in conjecturing her heart.

It would be a very charming narrative, were I capable of tracing it, to describe the courtship of this poor-young-possible-rich man. Living in his garret, working at his trade, thinking himself prospered when the end of a month left a few dollars surplus, and triumphing in Mary's genial congratulations thereat, and yet in his poverty ham-

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pered with a capricious possibility of a fortune which threatened to break all the prospects of his love. He found he could not get on either with his work or his love unless he resolutely foreswore all such expectations, and kept himself doggedly in the hard path of self-reliance.

So he refused to continue the suit against the will when it was suspended by Mr. Harry's death, and declared himself quite indifferent to the matter.

I will not say but that after he felt himself quite secure in the affections of his modest Mary he intended to make a new attempt to claim the fortune; but meanwhile he stuck well to his work; and after some objections he consented that Mary should, for a time at least, continue that service.

It was during this period, while Stephen was building castles in the air, not knowing whether they would turn out cottages or palaces, that a strange gentleman called at the great mansion of Mrs. Krebb and asked for her. Mary Cairnes saw him as he passed up stairs, and thought she had seen him before. He had a handsome yet weather-browed face, was well dressed, and had the bearing of a traveler. Mary could fix no recognition of him in her mind, but his apparition aroused reminiscences of her voyage, and the movements of the ocean. Neither of the servants heard him go away; whether he made a long call or a short one they could not tell. A day or two afterward Mrs. Krebb went away alone in her carriage, and came home late in the afternoon. The coachman said she went to the railroad station, and required him to await her return; he did not see any one meet her. The next day some one was heard to enter the house and pass up stairs. Mrs. Krebb said nothing to the servants of any visitor, and their curiosity was appealed to strongly by the circumstances.

It is a very curious feeling, that—the dim consciousness that something unknown is going on in the very circle of your own household. The sense of being on the outside of a secret penetrates the calmest mind, and quickens the perceptions of all the senses. Servants live in this con-

tinual condition, and it is not to be alleged against them as a sin, if the retina of the eye does become sensitive in side spots, so that what happens in a corner forces itself upon them; or if the drum of the ear grows ticklish, and takes notice, like that of the factory operative, of the least variation in sound from the ordinary monotony of routine. Nor is there any more exciting phase of this feeling than that which is aroused by the conviction that Somebody is in the house. *Somebody!* Treads come to be as well known as tones of voice. A tremor of the floor is either understood as plainly as a door-bell, or it makes you hold your breath and say, "It sounds as if Somebody were in the house!"

This belief began to prevail below stairs in Mrs. Krebb's mansion. But in proportion as the subject grew interesting to the cook and the coachman, it grew disagreeable to Mary Cairnes, who had less fancy for footfalls and key-holes and circumstantial evidence of scandals. She resolved, after a few days of these suspicions, to leave the house, and went upstairs to avow her determination to her employer, and ask for a recommendation. Mrs. Krebb had the best of reasons for acceding to this request without injury or objection, and gave her leave to go immediately. She opened her port-folio, and taking a scrap of paper, wrote her a good character, paid her in full, and bade her good-by. Mary, surprised and greatly relieved to be thus easily dismissed, left her first service, hoping that it might be her last.

When Stephen came home in the evening he listened to the story in silence. The accounts of the other servants, which Mary repeated in answer to his inquiries, after she had given the reason of her leaving, raised in his mind the conjecture that there had been a clandestine marriage. Stephen asked for the recommendation which Mrs. Krebb had given her.

"What are you going to do, Stephen?" asked his sister.

"I don't know, Susie. If it is a scandal in high life we've nothing to do with it. If Mrs. Krebb is married

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again, as it seems she ought to be, we have something to say."

As he folded up the paper some words penciled on the back caught his eye. They seemed to be, "Train for Hastings at 10 o'clock."

He asked Mary who wrote that, but she did not know. It had not been written since she had the paper. Mrs. Krebb took the paper from among the other loose pieces in her port-folio. She thought it was not Mrs. Krebb's own handwriting.

Stephen resolved to follow up this clew. The next day he went to the Hudson River station, and found there was a train for Hastings at the time named. He took it, and alighted in that town an hour after. The only question for me, said he, is, has there been a wedding? By inquiries at the residence of the clergyman of the town he found that on the day on which Mrs. Krebb had been absent a couple had called to ask for the clergyman, but that he was out of town at the time, and that they had gone away without giving any address. The vague description given him of the personal appearance of the lady was hardly enough to identify her positively, but the circumstance was sufficient for Stephen, and he resolved to call on Mrs. Krebb and ask her the question bluntly.

Although the young man had felt little inclined to regard the contingent possibility of his succeeding to the fortune so long as it was a mere possibility, he was not inclined now to submit to any deception. "I told her," said he to himself, "that I would never claim any more of his money than my own that I had paid him, but I will not allow her to defraud Susie, nor me either. She shall acknowledge the truth to me herself."

The servants' conjectures proved to be so far true that there was, in fact, "Somebody in the house." Somebody sat and talked with Mrs. Krebb in her sitting-room up stairs. Somebody came without its being known when he went away, and went without its having been known that he had come.

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Stephen, resolved to penetrate this mystery, called upon his aunt, and was shown into her presence.

After an awkward pause he said, bluntly, "Well, ma'am, I have come to ask you if you are married again."

Mrs. Krebb, instead of being covered with confusion at the discovery of her secret, merely smiled. "I confess," said she, "that there are some circumstances which would tend to excuse such a suspicion on your part. But I am surprised that you could think me capable of taking such a step clandestinely."

"I am not content with an evasive answer, Madam. Answer me, yes or no, if you please, and do not mislead me."

"I will not mislead you; but to answer either yes or no, alone, would mislead you."

"I do not understand you, ma'am."

"Well, then, let me ask you a question. Supposing that I am married again, what do you propose to do?"

This question, put in a quiet, smiling way, irritated the young man.

"It is enough for me," said he. "I have circumstantial evidence which renders it probable that you are clandestinely married. You do not deny it, but say that to deny it would be false. If you don't choose to tell the truth, no matter. I know the truth."

"Well, what do you propose to do?"

"I will tell you what I do *not* propose to do. I do *not* propose to treat with you. Your marriage forfeits the property, and it is now Susie's and mine. The will provides so. And however I might have felt if it were otherwise, I consider that any attempt at concealment on your part, such as I have detected, calls on me to assert our rights under the will."

"Perhaps you do not wish to discuss the question except by means of litigation; but you have already furnished me with a sufficient answer to your claim."

"What do you mean?"

"You have already informed me that you disavowed any expectations under the will."

Travelers' Checks

"What if I did? It was in conversation. I thought so then. But I have changed my mind."

"You forget to prove the will void. You made oath to it, I believe. It is too late for you to make any claim under the will."

So saying she drew from her port-folio the papers which Mr. Harry had left her. Stephen was silenced. He had nothing to say. He knew that he could not assert his rights without a law-suit, of which he had a great horror; and he saw that his adversary had the means of a defense or the show of a defense which he had not anticipated. He thought the easiest way out of it was to cut the knot in a way consistent both with his sense of his sister's rights and his own independence.

"I am not disposed," he replied, "to make litigation. I will tell you what I will do. Whatever I have said or done I will abide by. But that shall not prejudice Susie. You shall surrender to her one-half of the estate without any controversy, and we will both waive all further claim, marriage or no marriage."

"Please put the terms in writing, that they may be understood definitely; and I must show them to my adviser before I offer it as a proposal binding on me?"

Who was the adviser? Stephen did not know, unless it might be her legal adviser, until Mrs. Krebb took the paper he had written at her request and left the room, asking him to wait. Then it became apparent to Stephen that Mrs. Krebb's adviser was "Somebody in the house."

Mrs. Krebb came back smiling. "My adviser does not approve of the terms," said she.

"They are too liberal."

Stephen took up his hat, and moved to leave the room.

"Stay!" said she; "too liberal on *your* part, I mean. He says that I ought to relinquish more than half. To keep half would be scarcely just. For if there is no marriage you are entitled to nothing; and if there is a marriage, I think Susie would be ill satisfied with half the estate for herself and nothing for you."

Use United States Express

"What do you propose, then?" said Stephen, who began to feel that he was perhaps not gifted, certainly not experienced, in such negotiations.

"I propose that you and Susie should accept two-thirds of the estate, and waive all further claim in case of my marriage. Supposing that you were entitled to the whole estate—a claim you have already repudiated—and supposing that you could enforce the claim by a lawsuit, I ask you to relinquish your claim as to one-third upon my surrendering the other two-thirds."

"I would rather agree amicably upon that than recover the *whole* by a lawsuit," said Stephen, frankly.

"Then you entertain the proposal?" asked Mrs. Krebb.

"Yes, certainly. I will consider it. I can not answer finally now."

"I have a reason for proposing to reserve one-third which I think will be perfectly satisfactory to you when you know it."

"Perhaps so," said Stephen, dryly; "but I can't calculate the value of your mysteries. I must go on known facts."

"Very well. You will consider the matter."

"Yes."

"And we will come and see you to-morrow evening, and see if it is agreed on—if you will allow us."

The last words, and the cordial tones in which they were uttered by a handsome woman, overcame Stephen's pride.

"You will find us young birds in a very humble nest," said he, as he gave his address. "It is the fourth floor, the door on the right. It would be more suitable for me to come here, and I would rather do so."

"Ah! but you forget Susie. And then we want to see Susie in her own home."

"And who is it who is to come with you, may I ask?" said Stephen, with something of the cynical tone with which he had commenced the conversation.

"You will see," said Mrs. Krebb.

"Your adviser, I suppose?"

"Yes," replied she, laughing, "my adviser, we will say for the present."

Foreign Express Service

"And I presume it will be proper for me to have my adviser there too?"

"Certainly, if you wish," she replied, looking at him, in her turn, with an inquisitive air.

Stephen laughed, internally saying to himself, "She shall find that I can make a mystery as well as she can. And he added: "Then my adviser shall certainly be there, unless, indeed, *she* objects to be present."

"She! Who is she?" But Stephen was gone. He heard the question, and left his aunt to wonder what sort of a female lawyer Stephen had found for a legal adviser.

The young man now felt that his fortune was secured. His first act was the extravagance of buying a rich but simple ring, which he put that evening on Mary's finger as a pledge of their engagement. She mildly reproved him for being a spendthrift, but mingled such very sweet counter-agents with her chidings that he would have done it again in a minute. Stephen laid Mrs. Krebb's proposal before Susie, who joyfully approved it; but he did not mention her intended visit, because he wished it to be received in the most simple and natural way. Nor did he say a word of the negotiation to Mary, other than to tell her that he had got his first and last secret from her, which he should conceal only a few hours. Mary, looking at him calmly, seeing that he was in earnest—half grave, half smiling—set a sort of seal upon his lips that quite excused him for maintaining silence on the topic.

On the appointed evening Stephen was sitting with his little circle making an unsuccessful attempt to read aloud to them.

"I declare, Stephen," cried Susie, "something possesses you to-night, for you stop reading every time you hear a noise. If it were not a public staircase one would think you suspected somebody was in *our* house."

At this instant the door was opened by Stephen, and Mrs. Krebb entered, leaning on the arm of a tall and handsome gentleman, who looked about him with a blunt frank, kindly smile.

Use United States Express

"Good-evening!" said he, with a loud voice. "I wish joy to your little home. Nay, I see it here already. And this is Stephen, is it? Stephen, my boy, your hand!" and in a moment Stephen's surprised and unresisting hand was in the grip of a weather-beaten fist. "What! don't you remember me? Ah, look! No? Well, well! I deserve it. And here's Susie," said he, turning himself toward her and stretching out his arms as if he hesitated to advance first, while his eyes filled with her charming image and overflowed in two little exclamation points of tender feeling on his cheeks. "Here's Susie; what does the sister say?"

"Why Stephen!" exclaimed the agitated girl. "*Etienne!*" and she rushed into the outstretched arms that met her halfway.

"It is my brother," said Stephen, in his matter-of-fact way, and the next moment the men were embracing, while Susie hung on their indiscriminated necks putting in a kiss here and there at a hazard. But none of them were lost, Susie—sister dear!

Mrs. Krebb stood on one side, alternately laughing and crying at this scene. On the other side stood Mary, with her work in her hand, just as she had risen to leave the room, but transfixed with astonishment at this strange recognition of a face familiar to herself. As soon as she recovered herself she took her brother's hand to cause him to rise to leave the room with her. But Etienne said to Stephen, "Do not let her go;" and Stephen called her back.

"This," said Mrs. Krebb, coming forward to Etienne and taking him by the arm—"this is my adviser."

"And this," said Stephen, drawing Mary to him with one hand, and holding her at his side with the other arm around her—"this is my adviser."

Of course Mary looked up in blank astonishment.

"Yes," said Stephen, "you are and you always *shall* be my adviser."

"Stephen," said Etienne, "I acknowledge that you are

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even with me. I intended to surprise you, but you have anticipated me."

"I remember your brother," said Mary, speaking for the first time. "He saved us from shipwreck. I must thank him, which I did not do when I left him."

"No," said the captain, for such Etienne of course was. "My dog ran away with you; and, to tell the truth, I didn't blame him."

The captain took both of Mary's hands, and looked into her deep blue eyes. His right hand felt the ring upon the significant finger, and Mary felt him roll it back and forth as he leaned forward and kissed her brow.

"I've no need to wish you joy, Stephen," said he. "You have it all here; and if money can do you any good you shall have that too. When I came to New York last voyage a happy fate brought me to Margaret again. She decided to offer you half the estate and go with me; but I told her it ought to be two-thirds at least. I don't want more, for I've got enough; you might take it all and not hurt me. We've been up to Margaret's old home and made all the arrangements for the wedding, which is to be very quiet, for I'm a sort of truant, and nobody knows me; and it's to be next week. So it's all arranged, and it's only for you to say if it's agreeable to you, and what we shall do with the big estate?"

"There, Mary," said Stephen, "you see how it is; they propose to divide the estate into three shares, just as it would have been if Etienne had come home before Uncle Krebb had died, and they ask us if we approve of the match."

Poor Mary blushed at Stephen's blunt way of making her to appear the arbiter of her late employer's fortune and fate. She could only look up and timidly say: "You must choose for yourself, Stephen. I am quite too happy as it is."

"She says," said Stephen, good-naturedly, "that we must choose for ourselves; of course that involves being pleased with each other's choice. As to the estate, give

me enough to set up in business for myself, and to give Thomas here a start, and Susie must have the rest of what you don't take."

"No you don't, Stephen," said Etienne, maliciously. "If you don't take your third I'll never consent to your choice. So now, Mary, make him come to terms. And what is more, you must give up business and take care of the estate for us all. That will be enough occupation for you, for we are going abroad, and I can't attend to it; and I dare say Susie will make you *her* banker too."

In due time the weddings took place. They all went up to Hastings to the captain's wedding, which took place there; but Stephen insisted on being married in the same little sitting-room where his vows had been pledged in poverty, and Mary quite agreed with him in beginning modestly his new career.

Here Chum closed his paper and sat down. A buzz of satisfaction ran through the class, and they began to rise.

The Professor was heard tapping on his desk, and the room was silenced again.

"You have not told us," said he, "what became of Susie."

The boys all took their seats again as Chum rose to reply.

"As far as my account goes," said he, "that must be left to the imagination. It may be that she went abroad with Etienne and his wife, and that she spent the winter in Rome and married some Russian prince or an Italian nobleman. It may be that she staid quietly with Stephen and Mary, and that Thomas turned out a remarkably promising young man after he had been naturalized. Or it may be that she set up her own establishment on Fifth Avenue, and went into society with her own span on the Bloomingdale Road, and her own cottage at Newport, until she found her match in that way. On such questions as these, Sir, I can only say, as you told us in giving out the task, you may '*Choose for yourself.*'"

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